IN THE CLAIMS:

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9. (original) A process for preparing (S) -3-(aminomethyl)-5-methylhexanoic acid (pregabalin) comprising the steps of:

(a) contacting 2-isobutyl-succinonitrile with an enzyme catalyst having nitrilase activity in a reaction medium;

(b) recovering (S) -3-cyano-5-methylhexanoic acid from the reaction medium;

(c) converting (S) -3-cyano-5-methylhexanoic acid into an acid salt; and

(d) hydrogenating the acid salt to form (S)-3-(aminomethyl)-5-methylhexanoic acid (pregabalin).

10. (original) The process according to claim 9, wherein unchanged (R)-3-cyano-5-methylhexanoic acid is recovered from the reaction medium of step (a).

11. (original) The process according to claim 9 wherein said unchanged (R)-3-cyano-5-methylhexanoic acid of step (a) is racemized by heating with base in the presence of an organic solvent to form racemic 2-isobutyl-succinonitrile and step (a) is repeated using said racemic 2-isobutyl-succinonitrile.

12. (original) The method of claim 9 wherein said enzyme catalyst is a nitrilase in the form of whole microbial cells, permeabilized microbial cells, extracts of microbial cells, partially purified enzymes, purified enzymes or an enzyme catalyst immobilized on a support.

13. (original) A method according to claim 9 wherein said enzyme catalyst is selected from the group consisting of NIT-101, NIT-102,NIT-103 and nitrilase from *Arabidopsis thaliana*.